IBM

HELP PANEL FOR WEB PRODUCTS

EXHIBIT B

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COPY   Page 1

Title of Invention (Short & Descriptive)
HELP PANEL FOR WEB PRODUCTS
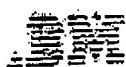
Disclosure No.	Functional Manager	Receiving Date	Receiving Time
RO896-0263	Steven W. Roth	12/08/96	18:35:50

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HELP PANEL FOR WEB PRODUCTS

Table 1. Critical Dates Information	
Date invention workable:	08/16/96
Used or Planned to be used:	Y
If so, Product Name?	Network Station
Release?	
Announce Date?	
Public Demonstration or Use:	Y
If so, When?	
Where?	
Disclosed to Non-IBMers:	
When?	
Offer to sale?	N
Use in Manufacturing:	N
If so, When?	
Where?	
Product Name?	
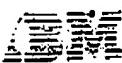
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HELP PANEL FOR WEB PRODUCTS   COPY   age 3 of 4

Problem

Help has always been a vital part of any computer program. It provides more in depth information about controls and options than can be shown on the panel the user is working with. In many operating systems (e.g. OS/2, Windows 5)... is displayed in a separate window. This allows the user to keep working in the main window, yet refer to the help window when needed.

In web applications, generally, the user asks for help by clicking on a hypertext link ... area is replaced by the help information. The browser's back button (or a similar ... the area of interest. This requires the user to remember the relevant help information ... awkward and makes the user pay a heavy penalty in terms of performance (both human and machine) whenever they need help.

Solution

Our solution to the problem uses JavaScript to spinoff a new small browser window (ours is about 250 X 400 ...) when the user clicks a help button. The new window consists of three frames - a contents frame (A), a help information frame (B) and a navigation frame (C).
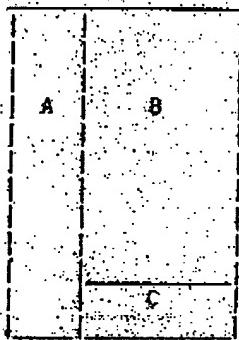
The contents frame (A) contains a table of contents for the help. The actual help text is displayed in frame B, and frame C contains three pushbuttons - Back, Forward and Close.

When a user clicks the help button, the new browser help window is opened. JavaScript is used to determine the page the user is on and which HTML file (containing help information) to display in Frame B. So, for instance, if the user is on web page X and the help button is pressed, the help window is opened with information specific to web page X in frame B.

Frame A displays a table of contents with hypertext links to the various HTML files and topics for the product. This table of contents provides a mechanism for the user to keep the help window up while working in a web product, and get help information for any panel.

This solution enables help to be viewed without interfering with the users interaction with the web page and reduces the mental workload and frustration for a user. It provides contextually relevant help while allowing the user to find any other help needed.

An early version of our product, with this function, can be found at:
HTTP://rchas317.rchland.ibm.com/QIBM/NetworkStation/MRI2924/usmgr.htm

Evaluation Questions

If this problem has been solved before, how was it solved?
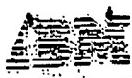
Why is your solution better?

Who outside of IBM (competitors) would want to use your solution?

How could IBM discover that competitors were using your solution?